

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 00529 110308Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
IO-13 OMB-01 /077 W
-----110458Z 002233 /17

R 110234Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6701
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMCONSUL MADRAS

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E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: PINT, PINR, CE
SUBJECT: DEATH OF TAMIL LEADER PONNAMBALAM

REF: COLOMBO 4090 (NOTAL)

1. G.G. PONNAMBALAM, ONE OF SRI LANKA'S MOST PROMINENT LEADERS OF THE MINORITY TAMIL COMMUNITY (AND A GOVERNMENT MINISTER FROM 1948-53), DIED IN MALAYSIA FEBRUARY 9. A NOTED LAWYER AS WELL AS POLITICIAN, PONNAMBALAM WAS ACTIVE IN BOTH FIELDS UP TO HIS DEATH AT AGE 75. HE WAS THE CHIEF COUNSEL IN LAST YEAR'S ULTIMATELY UNSUCCESSFUL CHALLENGE TO THE STATE OF EMERGENCY. HE HAD ALSO BEEN RETAINED AS DEFENSE LAWYER IN THE BRIBERY TRIAL IN MADRAS OF FORMER TAMIL NADU CHIEF MINISTER M. KARUNANIDHI.

2. ONE OF THE MAJOR PRE-INDEPENDENCE POLITICIANS OF CEYLON (HE WAS ELECTED TO THE FIRST STATE COUNCIL IN 1934). PONNAMBALAM LATER TURNED HIS EFFORTS TO ENSURING THE RIGHTS OF HIS OWN CEYLON TAMIL MINORITY COMMUNITY. HIS TAMIL CONGRESS BROKE UP SOON AFTER INDEPENDENCE INTO TWO FEUDING FRAGMENTS THAT WERE RECONCILED ONLY IN 1972
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WHEN THEY FORMED THE TAMIL UNITED FRONT, NOW THE TAMIL UNITED LIBERATION FRONT (TULF). THE TULF, WITH PONNAMBALAM AS ONE OF ITS TWO CO-PRESIDENTS SINCE LAST YEAR, NOW PROFESSES A SEPARATIST IDEOLOGY. NEVERTHELESS THE PARTY IS PLANNING TO CONTEST UPCOMING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AND PONNAMBALAM WAS SAID TO BE CONSIDERING RUNNING FOR HIS OLD SEAT OF JAFFNA.

3. HE DIED A WEALTHY MAN AND , LIKE MANY CEYLON TAMILS,
HAD FAMILY AND PROPERTY IN MALAYSIA, WHERE HE LIVED FOR
SIX MONTHS OF THE YEAR FOR TAX PURPOSES.

4. COMMENT: PONNAMBALAM'S DEATH POINTS UP THE AGING
LEADERSHIP OF THE TULF. THE OTHER PARTY CO-PRESIDENT,
S.J. V. CHELVANAYAKAM, IS 78 AND VIRTUALLY UNABLE TO
COMMUNICATE BECAUSE OF PARKINSON'S DISEASE. THE TULF HAS
AN ACTIVE YOUTH FOLLOWING WHICH IS GENERALLY FAR MORE
RADICAL AND ANTI-SINHALESE THAN ARE THE SURVIVORS FROM THE
COLONIAL DAYS.
REED

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DEATHS, POLITICAL LEADERS, MINORITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 11-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Original Previous Classification: n/a
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Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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